



Benefits Abound

How DANB Certification Benefits Dental Assistants, Dentist/Employers, Dental Assisting Educators, State Regulators and the Dental Industry

The benefits of Dental Assisting National Board Inc. (DANB) Certification are far-reaching – positively impacting not only the dental assistants who maintain Certification, but also their employers, patients and the dental community. There are more than 32,000 DANB Certificants in the United States. An elite group of professionals, DANB Certificants form a proud community that contributes to the delivery of quality oral healthcare, and the professionalism of their dental offices and teams. DANB Certificants reflect a professional commitment while enhancing the dental team's reputation and credibility.

For those dental assistants who meet the eligibility and examination requirements, certification may be earned as a Certified Dental Assistant (CDA) or Certified Orthodontic Assistant (COA). DANB Certification is a tangible way to demonstrate that a dental assistant has met or exceeded the criteria established to measure baseline knowledge and national competency standards in the profession.

Since 1948, DANB, a nonprofit organization, has been dedicated to Measuring Dental Assisting Excellence™. The American Dental Association recognizes DANB as the premier national certification agency for dental assistants. This recognition is supported by the American Dental Assistants Association, the American Dental Education Association and the American Association of Dental Examiners. Members of these four organizations are among those who serve on DANB's Board of Directors.

The following organizations also contribute to the quality and success of DANB certification programs by appointing subject matter experts to DANB Exam Committees:

- Academy of General Dentistry
- Academy of Oral and Maxillofacial Radiology
- American Association of Dental Office Managers
- American Association of Orthodontists
- Organization for Safety and Asepsis Procedures.

Benefits to Certified Assistants

DANB Certification enhances professional career ladder mobility and greater geographic mobility. DANB's CDA and COA credentials are currently recognized or required in 38 states to perform dental assisting functions. In these states, DANB Certification is one way, or in some cases the only way, to qualify to perform expanded functions or expose radiographs. Additionally, being a national credential, DANB Certification makes state-to-state job relocation easier.



Greater earning power is another key benefit to certification. According to the 2008 DANB Certificant Salary Survey, DANB Certificants can earn as much as \$2.38 more per hour compared to non-DANB-Certified colleagues.

Additionally, DANB Certified Assistants maintain a professional advantage in the job market. Dentists and other employers often look for and/or require CDA or COA credentials. Moreover, DANB Certification is often a prerequisite to performing expanded functions, and is required for those who are didactic dental assisting or clinical dental assisting educators in CODA-accredited programs.

In the dental office, DANB Certified Assistants stand out as professionals in the industry, which translates to improved hire-ability. DANB Certification demonstrates to colleagues and employers that the dental assistant has passed rigorous exams and met credentialing standards. As a result, many DANB Certificants benefit from greater job satisfaction, and are often role models to their colleagues.

Networking and employment opportunities are also available to DANB Certified Assistants. Many employers and recruiting firms turn to DANB for mailing lists of Certified Assistants to aid in their staffing and recruitment efforts. CDAs can also post their resumes on dentalworkers.com to find employment opportunities.

DANB provides its Certified Assistants with:

- A professional, personalized certificate, suitable for framing
- A wallet-sized Certification ID Card with the Certificant's name and ID number
- A Certification lapel pin
- Direct delivery of the Certified Press quarterly newsletter
- Anniversary milestone gifts

Benefits To the Dentist/Employer

DANB Certification benefits the dentists and employers of Certified Assistants in many ways. DANB Certificants demonstrate substantially less job turnover and greater employer loyalty. Turnover can be expensive to a practice, and certainly can be disruptive to the dental team and the patients.

From the 2008 DANB Certificant Salary Survey, DANB CDAs, on average, stay with the same employer 9.4 years. In addition, the amount of time a DANB CDA is employed as a practicing dental assistant has risen to 16.7 years on average. Both of these figures are up from the 2006 survey.

In addition to the clear financial impact of less turnover, the relative stability of DANB Certificants helps create a stronger team orientation in the office. In the practice setting, dentists benefit from patients seeing the same personnel from visit to visit. This



elevates the feelings of comfort and confidence in the practice and may improve patient retention.

Because Continuing Education is part of DANB's Recertification Requirements, DANB Certificants are lifelong learners. They are on the leading edge of the dental assisting field, and continuously expanding their knowledge and skills. This advances not only the dental assistants' career, but also the dental practices in which they work. DANB Certification is confirmation of a professional commitment to high standards in the practice of dental assisting.

The presence of DANB Certificants in the dental practice elevates the professionalism of the office. Not only is the dental assistant more confident in his/her abilities, the dentist can be more confident in the dental assistant; in the knowledge of professional vocabulary and practice standards, and in the performance of his/her responsibilities. Earning DANB Certification increases credibility of a dental assistant among colleagues, patients, employers and the communities.

In some states, DANB Certification allows the dental assistant to perform expanded duties, thus increasing effectiveness of the dental office. In those states that require or recognize DANB exams, DANB Certification assists the dentist in complying with state regulations. Hiring DANB Certificants can help standardize hiring practices and office protocol, and reduces subjectivity in dental office hiring decisions.

Beyond compliance, dental assistants who are DANB Certified provide a level of professionalism that can positively affect the practice's bottom line. A dental assistant who is DANB Certified has been tested and has demonstrated knowledge, skills and professional abilities. Supervisory needs may also be reduced, as allowed by state law – offering the dentist and the dental assistant more autonomy and more freedom, increasing practice efficiency.

Benefits to Dental Assisting Educators

DANB Certification is a tool used to verify the quality of dental assisting education programs. The Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA) is the national accrediting body, affiliated with the ADA, that establishes, maintains and applies standards to ensure the quality and continuous improvement of dental and dental-related education, including dental assisting programs. CODA meets in January and July of each year to review accreditation reports and award accreditation status to programs that meet CODA standards. If a program consistently graduates a high percentage of dental assisting students who pass the DANB exams, this indicates the quality and thoroughness of the program.



DANB mails periodic Program Performance Reports to program directors of dental assisting programs accredited by the CODA, as well as vocational-technical dental assisting programs, and to state dental boards that approve state-specific Registered Dental Assistant (RDA), Expanded Function Dental Assisting (EFDA) and other state-specific dental ancillary educational programs.

These reports assist the Program Directors/educators and regulators in comparing their aggregate student performance on DANB exams in three areas:

- From year-to-year within the program
- Current year against national and on-the-job-trained dental assisting performance
- From year-to-year against national and on-the-job-trained dental assisting performance.

Review of aggregate performance results on DANB exams also provides educators with information on the content areas of the exams that their students found most difficult, which could highlight a need for a review session or a strengthening of the curriculum in that area, especially if low scores in one or more exam content areas trend in that direction over time.

In order to teach dental assisting or clinical skills courses at a CODA-accredited dental assisting program, the educator must be DANB Certified. This ensures the expertise of the educator to students, as well as dental assisting program directors and administrators.

Benefits to State Regulators

DANB credentials are a tool used in determining professional competency in 38 states. State regulatory administrators use this metric in the promotion of public health and safety, and patient access to care. DANB certification exams serve as a baseline standard that regulators rely on to ensure a minimum competency level for dental assisting. Many states also require or recognize the CDA credential as an eligibility pathway for dental assistants to perform higher-level expanded functions.

As states develop their regulations to implement legislation, they often ask DANB to provide the following to assist them in deciding delegable duties:

- DANB's State Career Ladder Templates for Dental Assistants – An annually updated publication containing information regarding job designations for dental assistants; education, exam, and training requirements; functions a dental assistant may/may not perform; and levels of supervision required in that state.
- Core competency tables, based on DANB's surveys of dental assisting tasks
- Reports on allowable restorative functions by state



When a state decides to designate higher-level duties to dental assistants, DANB often is asked to develop and administer the state-specific credentialing or competency exam(s).

Benefits to the Industry

The need for states to protect health and safety, as well as increase public access to care, continues to rise. And with the declining dentist-to-population ratio in some areas, a greater burden is placed on the public health infrastructure. The role of the auxiliary dental staff has the potential of serving those in greatest need.

DANB Certificants can help alleviate some of the pressure in underserved areas if the states in question recognize or require DANB Certification in order to delegate expanded duties, therefore expanding the population of individuals qualified to provide or assist with oral healthcare services. Optimizing the number of patients seen can extend the reach of dental professionals at each level of the professional spectrum. Employing and extending the reach of skilled and dedicated individuals in the oral healthcare field, such as DANB Certificants, benefits not only the dental team but also the care of society as a whole.

DANB Certificants are in a class by themselves, as recognized by dental assistants who pursue DANB Certifications, dentists who hire Certified Assistants and CODA-accredited dental assisting program educators.